



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Presence in Albania

**REMARKS BY THE HEAD OF PRESENCE, AMBASSADOR EUGEN WOLLFARTH
ON THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OSCE PRESENCE IN ALBANIA**

27 March 2012

Madam Speaker,
Ministers,
Former President Moisiu,
Mrs. Dade,
Members of Parliament,
Excellencies,
Honoured Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is an important day for the OSCE Presence in Albania as it marks the 15th anniversary.

On 27 March 1997 the OSCE Permanent Council established in full consensus an OSCE presence in this country.

The OSCE Presence has walked with Albania 15 years along the long road of national reform through providing assistance to consolidate and strengthen national institutions.

Since 1997, the Presence has been involved in promoting democratization, the rule of law and human rights in line with the OSCE principles, standards and commitments.

Since then, the OSCE Presence in Albania works in the fields of electoral reform, legislative and judicial reform, property reform, administrative reform, parliamentary capacity-building, anti-trafficking and anti-corruption, media development, the promotion of good governance and police and security assistance, gender equality, and civil society development.

In saying this, it is also important to underline, that the OSCE Presence is only able to contribute to this through close co-operation with all our Albanian and international partners.

I would like to publically thank all those present and those who preceded us for all their dedication and support during all this time. Our thanks go to the participating States of the OSCE and their representatives on the ground including the host nation.

Our special thanks go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Haxhinasto, who is currently on official visits in the Golf region – I want to most cordially thank him for his institutional and personal support, trust and partnership, while wishing him a very successful trip and a safe return.

Madam Speaker,
Honoured Guests,

We should also be clear that over the last 15 years, due to the hard work and commitment of Governments from both sides, Albania has made significant progress. To name just a few of your achievements:

Unlike 1997, peace governs the streets throughout the country.

Albania is now a full NATO member actively contributing in achieving regional and global security goals.

And the visa liberalization is to be considered as another important landmark.

Albania clearly has good reasons to celebrate its 100 years with pride.

2012 will undoubtedly be a decisive year for Albania's international aspirations. With a lot of work to do.

Further progress needs to be seen in order to ensure that the institutions, that the democratic system and the rule of law function fully.

And the Assembly of Albania is a key institution in this respect.

It is therefore a very special honour for the OSCE Presence in Albania to mark the anniversary, were democracy should indeed find its visible expression: in a democratically elected parliament.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this generous gesture by opening the doors of this house for us on such a significant day.

Parliament is the place where a democratically sustained debate can and should take place. This is the spirit of democracy.

Today, we note with satisfaction some of the progress made on the approval of legislation requiring a qualified majority.

The election of the People's Advocate in the Assembly showed how cross party dialogue can work effectively to the benefit of the people.

Albania seems to have found back to much needed viability.

It is a development that needs to be commended. And it needs to continue.

We look forward to further progress being made on electoral, judicial and parliamentary reform.

We look forward to increased efforts to combat corruption and trafficking.

We look forward towards a timely and qualitative engagement and conclusion of reform projects.

Recent signs have been encouraging.

What is required for the next steps: a substantial amount of sense for compromise, fairness, and goodwill is further needed to actually be able to deliver. Trust needs to grow further.

Madam Speaker,

Honoured Guests,

The OSCE Presence has worked very closely with the Assembly in organizing an important roundtable on electoral reform that is being held in Tirana as we speak.

I hope and believe very strongly that all national actors will make best use of the international expertise on offer.

As I have said, the Albanian Assembly is first and the foremost, *the* place to deliver.

The OSCE Presence traditionally supports the Assembly in further developing its human resource management capacities, in improving its transparency and availability of parliamentary information, in modernizing its infrastructure, and in strengthening its library resources.

Part of this contribution to the Assembly's library is the present publication, in English, of the Manual of Legislature 2009-2013.

Madam Speaker,
Ministers,
Former President Moisiu,
Mrs. Dade,
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Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by wishing to us all a fruitful future co-operation in the best spirit of security and co-operation that sees in Albania a most worthy partner on the road towards reform. And now, I would like to invite you to raise your glasses and join me in a toast to the future success of Albania.

Success to Albania!

Thank you very much.

Ends